


15 Fixes for Broken Grades



Listening. Learning. Leading.

ETS Assessment Training Institute
15 Fixes for Broken Grades

Presented by Ken O'Connor
January 28, 2008

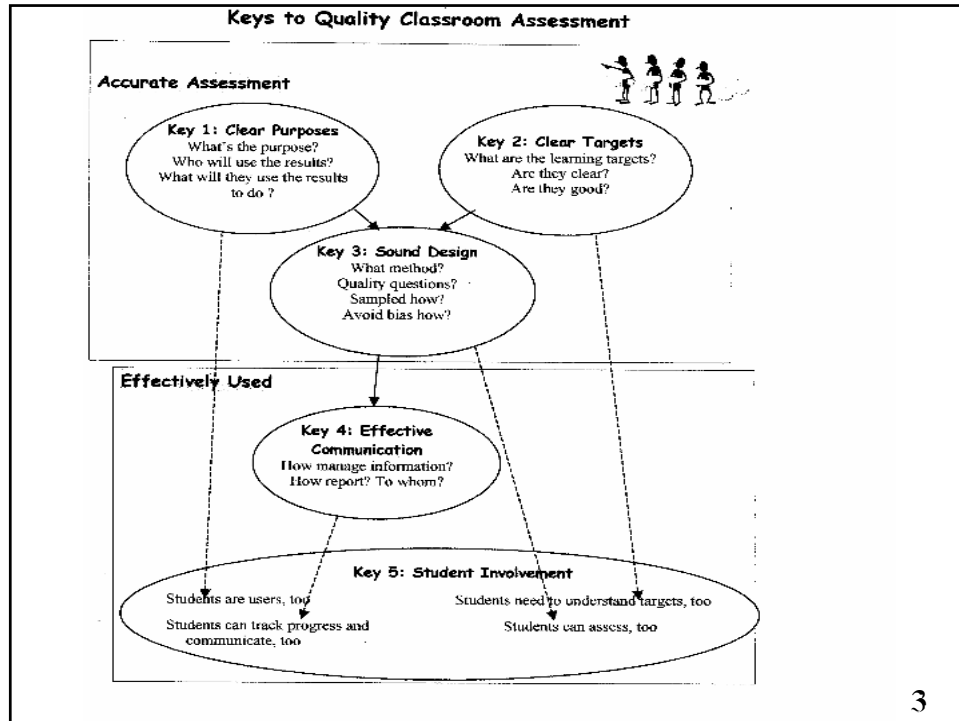



**Effective Communication -
15 Fixes for Broken Grades**

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15 Fixes for Broken Grades





What Do These Terms Mean?

MARK(S)/SCORE(S) (marking/scoring)

the number (or letter) "score" given to any student test or performance	$\frac{7}{10}$ 4 3 2 1
---	------------------------------

GRADE(S) (grading)

the number (or letter) reported at the end of a period of time as a summary statement of student performance	A 91 4 E B 78 3 G C 64 2 S D 57 1 N F 42
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15 Fixes for Broken Grades



The Essential Question(s)

How confident are you that the grades students get in your school are:

- **consistent**
- **accurate**
- **meaningful, and**
- **supportive of learning?**

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“Why . . . Would anyone want to change current grading practices?”

The answer is quite simple: grades are so imprecise that they are almost meaningless.”

Marzano, R. J., *Transforming Classroom Grading*,
ASCD, Alexandria, VA, 2000, 1

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“The grading box is alive and well, and in some schools and classrooms, it is impenetrable. Fair does not mean equal; yet, when it comes to grading, we insist that it does.”

Patterson, William “Breaking Out of Our Boxes,” *Kappan*, April 2003, 572

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“Those who experience . . . success gain the confidence needed to risk trying. . . . Students who experience failure lose confidence in themselves, stop trying, and . . . fail even more frequently. As it turns out, *confidence* is the key to student success in all learning situations.”

Stiggins, R., *Student-Involved Classroom Assessment*, Merrill Prentice Hall, 2001, 43

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Keys to Creating a Learning Community


P – Am I sending POSITIVE messages?

C – Am I offering CHOICES?

R – Am I encouraging REFLECTION

From:- www.MarvinMarshall.com

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“the primary purpose of . . . grades . . . (is) to *communicate student achievement* to students, parents, school administrators, post-secondary institutions and employers.”

Bailey, J. and McTighe, J., “Reporting Achievement at the Secondary School Level: What and How?”, in Thomas R. Guskey, (Ed.) *Communicating Student Learning: ASCD Yearbook 1996*, ASCD, Alexandria, VA, 1996, 120

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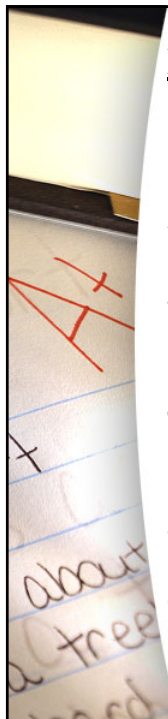
Grades are broken when they -

- include ingredients that distort achievement
- arise from low quality or poorly organized evidence
- are derived from inappropriate number crunching,

and when they

- do not support the learning process.

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Fixes for ingredients that distort achievement

1. Don't include student behaviors (effort, participation, adherence to class rules, etc) in grades; include only achievement.
2. Don't reduce marks on "work" submitted late; provide support for the learner.
3. Don't give points for extra credit or use bonus points; seek only evidence that more work has resulted in a higher level of achievement.
4. Don't punish academic dishonesty with reduced grades; apply other consequences and reassess to determine actual level of achievement.
5. Don't consider attendance in grade determination; report absences separately.
6. Don't include group scores in grades; use only individual achievement evidence.

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Fixes for low quality or poorly organized evidence

- 7. Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods or simply summarize into a single grade; organize and report evidence by standards/learning goals.
- 8. Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations.
- 9. Don't assign grades based on student's achievement compared to other students; compare each student's performance to preset standards.
- 10. Don't rely on evidence from assessments that fail to meet standards of quality; rely only on quality assessments.

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Fixes for inappropriate number crunching

- 11. Don't rely only on the mean; consider other measures of central tendency and use professional judgment.
- 12. Don't include zeros in grade determination when evidence is missing or as punishment; use alternatives, such as reassessing to determine real achievement or use "I" for Incomplete or Insufficient Evidence.

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Fixes to support the learning process

13. Don't use information from formative assessments and practice to determine grades; use only summative evidence.

14. Don't summarize evidence accumulated over time when learning is developmental and will grow with time and repeated opportunities; in those instances, emphasize more recent achievement.

15. Don't leave students out of the grading process. Involve students; they can - and should - play key roles in assessment and grading that promote achievement.

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Key fix for ingredients that distort achievement

1. Don't include student behaviors (effort, participation, adherence to class rules, etc) in grades; include only achievement.

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15 Fixes for Broken Grades

#1

Sum total of everything students do in school/classroom

Select a representative sampling of what students do

Process

Assessment of students using observation over time
e.g. • learning logs
• journals
• portfolios
• teacher observations/anecdotal notes

Product

Assessment tasks
e.g. • performances
• presentations
• tests/quizzes/examinations
• culminating demonstrations

Attitude/Learning Skills/Effort

• enjoys learning
• questions/investigates
• class participation
• works independently
• completes assignments
• completes research/projects
• cooperates with others
• respects others
• resolves conflicts
• attendance, punctuality
• reflects and sets goals

ACHIEVEMENT

Reporting Variables
(Desirable Behaviors)

Report
Card

Grading Variables
(Standards, Learning

O'Connor, K., *How to Grade for Learning*, Second Edition, Corwin, 2002, 42


Goals, Benchmarks
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Ontario		Provincial Report Card Grades 9-12		Semester	Report Period	Date	
Student		Grade		Principal			
Address		School Council Chair		Board			
School		Telephone		Address			
Address		Fax		Address			
Courses		Report Period		Attendance		Learning Skills	
IEP = Individual Education Plan ESL = English As a Second Language ELD = English Literacy Development These boxes appear for each course where appropriate		Percentage Grade		Classes Missed		E = Excellent G = Good S = Satisfactory N = Needs Improvement	
Course Title: _____ Course Code: _____ Teacher: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> IEP <input type="checkbox"/> ESL <input type="checkbox"/> ELD		First		Total		Works	
		Final		Classes		Independently	
				Times Late		Teamwork	
						Organization	
						Work Habits	
						Homework	
						Initiative	
Comments		Strengths/Areas for Improvement/Next Steps					
Course Title: _____ Course Code: _____ Teacher: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> IEP <input type="checkbox"/> ESL <input type="checkbox"/> ELD		First					
		Final					
Course Title: _____ Course Code: _____ Teacher: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> IEP <input type="checkbox"/> ESL <input type="checkbox"/> ELD		First					
		Final					
Course Title: _____ Course Code: _____ Teacher: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> IEP <input type="checkbox"/> ESL <input type="checkbox"/> ELD		First					
		Final					
Course Title: _____ Course Code: _____ Teacher: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> IEP <input type="checkbox"/> ESL <input type="checkbox"/> ELD		First					
		Final					
Student's Average							
Principal's Signature							

To view provincial curriculum documents, visit the Ministry of Education's website: www.edu.gov.on.ca.
For more information call (416) 325-2929 or toll free 1-800-387-5514.

To parents or guardians and students: This copy of the report should be kept for reference. The original or an exact copy has been placed in the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR) folder and will be retained for two (2) years after the student leaves school.

15 Fixes for Broken Grades




Key fixes for low quality or poorly organized evidence

7. Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods or simply summarize into a single grade; organize and report evidence by standards/ learning goals.

8. Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations.

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#7

Don't organize information in grading records by assessment methods or simply summarize into a single grade; organize and report evidence by standards/ learning goals.

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#7

Summary of Evidence for BC Mathematics
1st Grading Period

Student: _____

Assessments →	Achievement Evidence												S u m m a r y
	9/13 Test	9/20 P/A	9/23 P/A	9/24 P/A	9/25 Test	9/30 P/A	10/5 Test	10/8 P/A	10/12 Test	10/19 P/A	10/21 P/A	10/23 Exam	
Standards ▼													
Problem Solving			2		11/20 (1)		16/20 (3)			2		7/10 (2)	C
Number	19/20 (4)	4			18/20 (4)			4				16/20 (3)	A
Patterns and Relations		4		2		3	16/20 (3)				3	10/10 (4)	B
Shape and Space	11/20 (1)	2				2				2		14/20 (2)	C
Statistics and Probability		1		2		3	20/20 (4)			4		19/20 (4)	A
Comments:													
Overall grade												B	21

#7

“The use of columns in a grade book to represent standards, instead of assignments, tests, and activities, is a major shift in thinking . . . Under this system, when an assessment is designed, the teacher must think in terms of the standards it is intended to address. If a (test) is given that covers three standards, then the teacher makes three entries in the grade book for each student - one entry for each standard - as opposed to one overall entry for the entire (test).”

Marzano, R., and J. Kendall, *A Comprehensive Guide to Developing Standards-Based Districts, Schools, and Classrooms*, McREL, Aurora, CO, 1996, 150

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#7

“The principal limitation of any grading system that requires the teacher to assign one number or letter to represent . . . learning is that one symbol can convey only one meaning. . . .

One symbol cannot do justice to the different degrees of learning a student acquires across all learning outcomes.”

Tombari and Borich, *Authentic Assessment in the Classroom*,
Prentice Hall, 1999, 213

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Fix #8

Don't assign grades using inappropriate or unclear performance standards; provide clear descriptions of achievement expectations.

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#8

“Performance standards specify ‘how good is good enough.’ They relate to issues of assessment that gauge the degree to which content standards have been attained. . . . They are indices of quality that specify how adept or competent a student demonstration should be.”

Kendall, J., and R. Marzano, *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education*, First Edition, McREL, 1997, 16-17

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#8

Performance Standards

How good is good enough?

Traditional School approaches


A	80-100% - Outstanding	Excellent
B	70-79% - Above Average	Good
C	60-69% - Average	Satisfactory
D	50-59% - Below Average	Poor
F	<60% - Failing	Unacceptable

Standards-based approaches

Advanced	Above standard
Proficient	Meets standard
Basic	Below but approaching standard
Below Basic	Well below standard

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#8

For classroom assessment

Performance Standards


OVERALL performance descriptors
(school, district, state or provincial
e.g., A B C D; 4 3 2 1; E M N U)

SUBJECT/TASK scoring tools (rubrics, etc)

SPECIFIC +
work samples (exemplars)
+
commentaries on the work samples

Adapted from *New Standards Sampler*, National Center on Education and the Economy, www.ncee.org

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**Don't rely only on the mean;
consider other measures of central
tendency and use professional
judgment.**

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#11

“Averaging falls far short of providing an accurate description of what students have learned. . . . If the purpose of grading and reporting is to provide an accurate description of what students have learned, then *averaging* must be considered *inadequate and inappropriate*”.

Guskey, Thomas R. (Editor), *Communicating Student Learning: The 1996 ASCD Yearbook*, ASCD, Alexandria, VA, 1996, 21

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#11

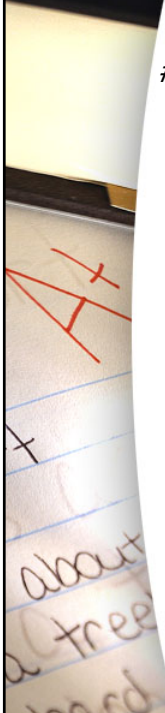
**Letter to the Editor
- Toronto Globe and Mail
October 15, 2003**

Whenever I hear statistics being quoted I am reminded of the statistician who drowned while wading across a river with an average depth of three feet.

**GORDON McMANN
Campbell River, B.C.**

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15 Fixes for Broken Grades



#11

	89	
	89	
	89	Mean or Average = 75.2
	20	
	89	
	89	Median = 89
	89	
	20	
	89	
	<u>89</u>	
Total	<u>752</u>	

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#11

"Grading by the median provides more opportunities for success by diminishing the impact of a few stumbles and by rewarding hard work."

Wright, Russell. G., "Success for All: The Median is the Key", *Kappan*, May 1994, 723-725

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15 Fixes for Broken Grades



Key Fix to support the learning process

13. Don't use information from formative assessments and practice to determine grades; use only summative evidence.

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#13

“The thrust of formative assessment is toward improving learning and instruction. Therefore, the information should not be used for assigning (grades) as the assessment often occurs before students have had full opportunities to learn content or develop skills.”

Manitoba Education and Training, Reporting on Student Progress and Achievement: A Policy Handbook for Teachers, Administrators and Parents. Winnipeg, 1997, 9

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“The ongoing interplay between assessment and instruction, so common in the arts and athletics, is also evident in classrooms using practices such as nongraded quizzes and practice tests, the writing process, formative performance tasks, review of drafts and peer response groups. The teachers in such classrooms recognize that ongoing assessments provide feedback that enhances instruction and guides student revision.”

Jay McTighe, “What Happens Between Assessments,”
Educational Leadership, Dec. ‘96-Jan. ‘97, 11

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#13

Purposes of Homework

PREPARATION - introduces material to be presented in future lessons. These assignments aim to help students learn new material when it is covered in class.

PRACTICE - to reinforce learning and help students master specific skills.

EXTENSION - asks students to apply skills they already have in new situations.

INTEGRATION - requires students to apply many different skills to a large task, such as book reports, projects, creative writing.

Source: NCLB website - *Homework Tips for Parents*

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15 Fixes for Broken Grades

Grades

should come from

body + performance + fixes
of standards (guidelines)
evidence

i.e., professional judgment

NOT

just number crunching

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To evaluate or judge is to reach

“a sensible conclusion that is
consistent with both *evidence*
and common sense”

Robert Linn, UCLA/CRESST

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15 Fixes for Broken Grades

For grades that are:

Consistent	fix	8
Accurate	fixes	1 2 3 4 5 6 9 10 11 12 14
Meaningful	fix	7
Supportive of learning	fixes	13 14 15

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**What are the next directions? - the
15 Fixes and what they mean for you:**

For each fix

- **What do you think? - PMI**
- **Where are you (individual)/
school/district now?**
- **Where do you want to go in terms of
the procedure/policy?**

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15 Fixes for Broken Grades

EXIT SLIP

1. What is the most important new insight, understanding, or realization that has come to you as a result of this session?

AND/OR

2. What is the most important reaffirmation of something you already do or have always believed?

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ETS Assessment Training Institute

The contents of this webinar are based on the book *A Repair Kit for Grading: 15 Fixes for Broken Grades* by Ken O'Connor.

More information about this book can be found at www.ets.org/ati.